

History teacher set standard for 32 years

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — For 32 years he's taught the children of Duxbury the history of their country.

And for the past 10 years, Carl Meier also headed the school system's curriculum council.

Now he believes it's time for him to retire so he can read, play more golf and watch movies.

"He defines the word 'educator,'" said Betsy Sullivan, chairwoman of the school committee.

Meier, who will be honored at the high school graduation Saturday, said he wants to leave while people are disappointed to see him go rather than "wait until they're glad to see the back of me."

"He wants to leave at the top of his game," Sullivan said.

But Meier, 55, said that in retirement he'll get time to improve a game he loves almost as much as history — golf.

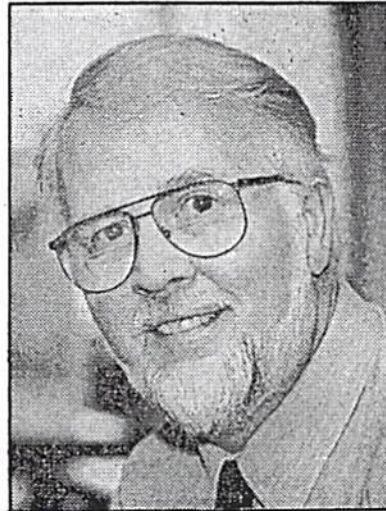
"He's like an artist," Sullivan said of Meier's teaching. "Any child who goes into his classroom comes out with a love of learning what he's taught."

Meier has taught U.S. history and philosophy since coming to Duxbury in 1966.

He began teaching in Duxbury in the fifth grade in a building that recently was converted into the town's new public library.

"I was living in Melrose and teaching in Haverhill," Meier recalled, "and I didn't like it at all."

A native of upstate New York and a graduate of Hamilton College, Meier was in Melrose because it was



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Carl Meier

Duxbury

his wife's hometown and because his education qualified him for a teaching certificate in Massachusetts.

When he got the Duxbury job, he and his wife, Carrie, bought a house in town for \$19,600 and raised two boys, both of whom went through the Duxbury schools and later went on to earn advanced college degrees.

Meier began teaching history at the high school in 1978, the same year he earned a master's degree at Syracuse University.

Meier said that over the years he hasn't seen any significant change in the caliber of Duxbury students.

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"This town has always valued education highly and demanded a good school system," he said. "The overwhelming majority of the kids I've taught and the parents I've dealt with have been serious about their school and their education."

Meier, who teaches pre-Civil War history, said he emphasizes the causes of events: Why in the 1770s did a people who considered themselves Englishmen break away from England, for example, or why, in the 1850s, did the country fall apart?

"I don't have any interest in military history," he said, "so I don't teach the American Revolution or Civil War for six weeks like some teachers do."

But over the 32 years he's been in Duxbury, Meier said, he's changed the focus of his teaching.

"There's been increasingly more attention paid to social history," he said, "to the lives of ordinary people."

As head of the curriculum council since it was established 10 years ago, Meier has been responsible for improving communications between teachers and administrators.

"He has a real clear vision and is so well respected he can get people with very different views of the world to find a middle ground," Sullivan said.

Meier said a major achievement of the curriculum council was to expand the advanced placement program. The move recently resulted in Duxbury being cited in Newsweek magazine as one of the best high schools in the country for challenging students.

"The kids here who put out the effort get an excellent education," Meier said. "The kids who don't, don't," he added.

Meier will be honored at a reception from 3 to 5 p.m. June 12 in the public library's Merry Room. Former students, parents and the public are invited to attend. For information, call Bill Thomas at (781) 934-7640.